

Utah's Rural Character

Definition, Inventory and Analysis Checklist



A planning tool for
Utah's communities
provided by the
Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
State and Local Planning Section



Utah's Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis Checklist

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www.planning.utah.gov/ruralcharacter.htm**



Introduction and Table of Contents



Introduction

The purpose of the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) *Utah’s Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis Checklist* is to assist Utah communities to:

- define and better understand the meaning of rural character;
- describe and analyze the elements of their rural character;
- identify, inventory and map their rural characteristics;
- access the basic information necessary to inform strategies and allow for local solutions that can maintain desired rural character.

If the objectives outlined in this planning checklist are accomplished, a definition, inventory and analysis of your community’s rural character will be generated.

The *Rural Character Checklist* is a purposefully brief and easily accessible tool developed with the non-professional planner in mind. In order to use this checklist all that is required is a basic knowledge of one’s community and a desire to learn more about it! However, as with all of GOPB’s planning tools, technical assistance is always available from GOPB staff specialists.

The *Rural Character Checklist* includes:

- a planning checklist, including helpful definitions, for communities to follow as they identify their rural character;
- a model Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis;
- a model Rural Character Map;
- a model Rural Character Elements and Values Table.

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Organization

Each of the five Rural Character Checklist sections, outlined above in the Table of Contents, is accompanied by 1) a simple definition and 2) a checklist objective, stated as “Checklist Item.” The “Checklist Item” should be included in your community’s Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis. For each “Checklist Item” an example of how this might look in your plan is included. The example language is encompassed by a double line box, generally on the right side of each page. Another example of how the recommended “Checklist Item” language can be incorporated into your plan is found on p. 10, as a part of the Example Rural Character Map.



#1. Rural Character Defined



1. Rural Character Defined

Rural character is defined by the unique characteristics of a place and its inhabitants.

Rural character includes both the physical and social environment.

- The physical environment includes such things as buildings, places, organization/layout, landscape, etc.
- The social environment may include shared traditions, lifestyles, activities, events, employment, etc.

Additional useful definitions of rural character from other states:

Washington State:

<http://nh.gov/oep/resourcelibrary/referencelibrary/r/ruralcharacter/washingtonstatedefinesruralcharacter.htm>

New Hampshire:

<http://nh.gov/oep/resourcelibrary/referencelibrary/r/ruralcharacter/definitionsfrompreservingcommunitycharacter.htm>

☐ Checklist Item #1:

Rural Character should be defined at the beginning of your community's *Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis*.

Here is an example of how this may look:

What is Rural Character?

- The unique characteristics of a place and its inhabitants.
- Includes both the physical and social environment.
 - a. physical environment- buildings, places, organization, landscapes, etc.
 - b. social landscape- shared traditions, lifestyles, activities, events, employment, etc.



#2. Rural Character Districts



#2. Rural Character Districts

Communities can be delineated by distinct character districts or zones. These districts are representative of the dominant land use or landscape; in other words, the predominant character of that district or zone.

Character Districts may include such zones as:

- Central Business District or Commercial Core
- Major transportation routes, such as an Interstate Highway
- Residential
- Agricultural
- Natural landscape (e.g., watershed, forest, river, etc.)

And there could be numerous other possible Character Districts depending on the size and complexity of a community.

☐ Checklist Item #2:

Your community's Character Districts should be identified and listed as the second section of your *Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis*.

Character Districts

"Our Community" can be delineated by eight distinct character districts or zones. These districts or zones are representative of the dominant land use or landscape; in other words, the predominant character of that district or zone.

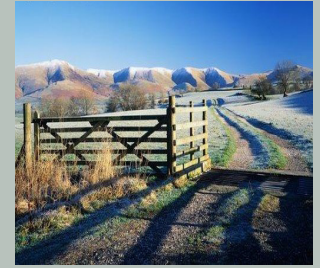
The eight rural character districts or zones are mapped in the Rural Character Map and include:

1. Central Business District/Commercial Core
2. Highway 91
3. Eastside Residential
4. Westside Residential
5. Upper bench
6. Southwest Agricultural land
7. South Agricultural land
8. North Agricultural land

Note: These eight character districts are only examples, which correspond to the *Example Rural Character Map* found on page 10. Your community will have different rural character districts or zones.



#3. Rural Character Elements



#3. Rural Character Elements

Character Elements are the characteristics and components within your community that lend to the rural character and uniqueness.

Character Elements can be both tangible and intangible, physical and social. Tangible elements are often physical structures and places, whereas intangible elements are related to activities, events, memories, feelings, etc.

Character Elements can, for the most part, be mapped. Both physical and social, or tangible and intangible, elements are often connected to a place. What is important is analyzing and understanding the value of the element to the community.

Rural Character Elements can be valued for five different reasons:

1. *Historical/Structural/Architectural Value:*

Elements that are identified as having historical value, representative of a certain time period and your community's past. Structural and architectural value can include other structures that are valued for their architectural quality, dominance in the community, and unique identify.

2. *Social/Psychological Value:*

Elements that are valued for their social aspects within your community include such things as gathering places, places for casual conversation, and places where one can meet their neighbor. Other elements are valued for their psychological

value within your community. These are often connected to memories, feelings, and associations that have occurred over time.

3. *Functional Value:*

Functional values are related to how the residents of your community use and function within a specific place, space, area, or district. It can relate to the functional use of a building, commercial core, or surrounding landscape.

4. *Spatial Value (form and layout):*

Spatial values are those that represent influences on town form, the manner in which people function in a space due to the spatial arrangement, the manner in which spaces are defined, and elements that contribute to way-finding. Individual buildings, groupings of buildings, spatial districts, streets, and surrounding landforms all can contribute to the spatial value of your community.

5. *Visual/Scenic Value:*

Visual values correspond to the manner in which character elements are perceived and the importance of them in the scenic and visual environment of your community. As with other value categories, visual values can be represented in any of the five character element categories and range from individual buildings to surrounding and even distant landforms. Character elements can be valued for their role as a landmark, vista, viewshed, aesthetic contribution, uniqueness of expression, themes, etc.



#3. Rural Character Elements



☐ Checklist Item #3:

Your community's Rural Character Elements should be identified and listed as the third section of your *Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis*.

Character Elements

Character elements are the characteristics and components within "Our Community" that lend to the rural character and uniqueness. Character elements can be both tangible and intangible, physical, and social. Tangible elements are often physical structures and places, whereas intangible elements are related to activities, events, memories, feelings, etc.

Character elements can, for the most part, be mapped. Both physical and social, or tangible and intangible, elements are often connected to a place. The important distinction is understanding the value of the element to the community.

Elements can be valued for five different reasons:

1. Historical/Structural/Architectural Value:

Elements that are identified as having historical value, representative of a certain time period and "Our Community's" past. Structural and architectural value can include other structures that are valued for their architectural quality, dominance in the community, and unique identity.

2. Social/Psychological Value:

Elements that are valued for their social aspects within "Our Community" include such things as gathering places, places for casual

conversation, and places where one can meet their neighbor. Other elements are valued for their psychological value within "Our Community". These are often connected to memories, feelings, and associations that have occurred over time.

3. Functional Value:

Functional values are related to how the residents of "Our Community" use and function within a specific place, space, area, or district. It can relate to the functional use of a building, commercial core, or surrounding landscape.

4. Spatial Value (form and layout):

Spatial values are those that represent influences on town form, the manner in which people function in a space due to the spatial arrangement, the manner in which spaces are defined, and elements that contribute to way-finding. Individual buildings, groupings of buildings, spatial districts, streets, and surrounding land forms all can contribute to the spatial value of "Our Community."

5. Visual/Scenic Value:

Visual values correspond to the manner in which character elements are perceived and the importance of them in the scenic and visual environment of "Our Community." As with other value categories, visual values can be represented in any of the five character element categories and range from individual buildings to surrounding and even distant landforms. Character elements can be valued for their role as a landmark, vista, viewshed, aesthetic contribution, uniqueness of expression, themes, etc.

"Our Community's" rural character elements are mapped in the rural character map and include: *(list elements here)*



#4. Rural Character Map



#4. Rural Character Map

Both Rural Character Districts AND Elements should be mapped on a Rural Character Map. Mapping can be accomplished by a variety of means as simple as hand-plotting to more technical methods incorporating GPS tools and GIS software.

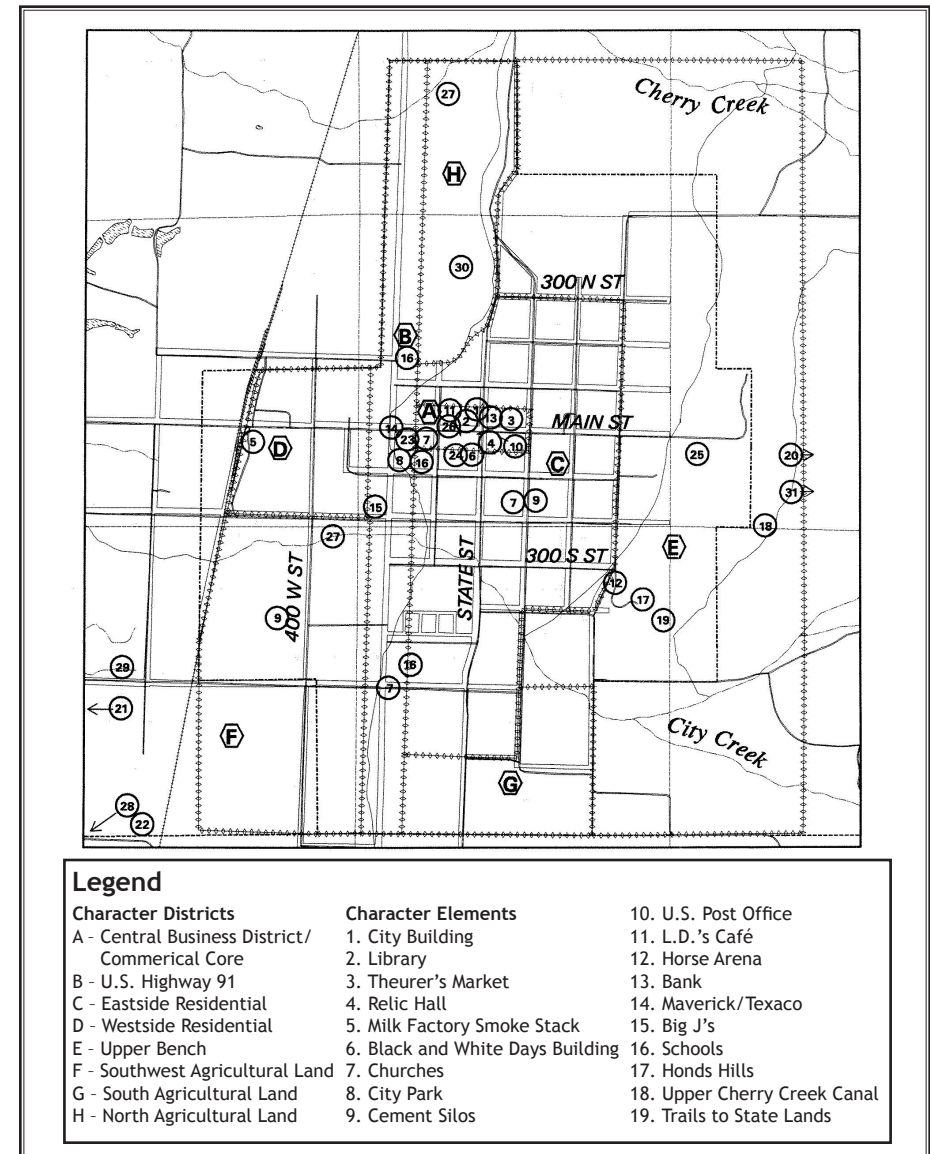
There are multiple means to acquire a map (either hard copy or digital) of your community:

1. your town planning commission, town council, town clerk (or town planner, if there is one) should maintain a latest version of the community map and boundaries;
2. your county's GIS staff person;
3. the State of Utah's Automated Geographic Reference Center (AGRC).

Note: A full size example map can be found on page 9.

☐ Checklist Item #4: (right)

Your community's Rural Character Districts and Elements should be mapped as the fourth section of your *Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis*.





#5. Rural Character Values Table



#5. Rural Character Values Table

The Rural Character Values Table indicates the Rural Character Elements identified by your community. Each element has a value or set of values associated with it and its importance in rural character. Many of the elements overlap and are valued for multiple reasons.

Note: A blank copy of the Rural Character Values Table for your own community's use can be found on page 11.

☐ Checklist Item #5: (right)

Your community's Rural Character Elements should be analyzed regarding each element's individual values as the fifth and final section of your *Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis*.

Character Element	Historical/ Structural/ Architectural Value	Social/ Psychological Value	Functional Value	Spatial Value	Visual Scenic Value
City Building	Historic	Meeting Place	City Services	CBD	
Library	Historic	Meeting Place	Library	CBD	Architecture
Theurers Market	Historic	Casual Meeting	Goods and Services	CBD	
Relic Hall	Historic	Memories		CBD	Architecture
Smoke Stack-Milk Factory	Architecture				Landmark
Black and White Days Building	Dominant Structure	Meeting Place	Auctions/ Shows	CBD	
Black and White Days Celebration	Historic	Heritage/ Culture			
City Park		Meeting place	Outdoor Activity		Open Space
Cement Silos	Historic	Memories/ Vernacular			Landmarks
U.S. Post Office	Dominant Structure	Casual Meeting	Postal Service	CBD	
L.D.'s Cafe	Historic	Meeting Place	Restaurant	CBD	
Horse Arena		Community Interest	Outdoor Activity		
Bank		Casual Meeting	Business		
Churches	Dominant Structure	Meeting place	Service		
Big J's			Business		
Schools			Education		
Honda Hills		Community Association	Outdoor Activity		
Upper Cherry Creek Canal		Community Association	Outdoor Activity		Open Space
Trails to State Lands			Outdoor Activity		
NC Hillside Logo		Community Association			Landmark
Claine's Bridge		Community Association	Fishing		



Conclusions



Next Steps

The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget recommends that communities adopt the results of using the *Rural Character Checklist* into their general plan. In addition, communities may consider strategies for maintaining rural character such as creative zoning, design guidelines, transfer of development rights, conservation easements, land development options and incentives, etc.

Further Readings



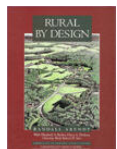
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U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Linda Flint McClelland, National Park Service, J. Timothy Keller, ASLA, Genevieve P. Keller, and Robert Z. Melnick, ASLA. 1989; Revised 1999.
http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb30/nrb30_3.htm



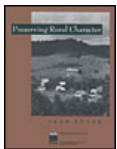
The Small Town Planning Handbook

Thomas L. Daniels, John Keller, Mark Lapping, Katherine Daniels, James Segedy.
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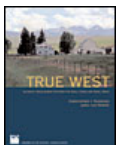
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Randall Arendt, Elizabeth A. Brabec, Harry L. Dodson, Christine Reid and Robert D. Yaro.
 Planners Press, American Planning Association (January 1994).



True West

Christopher Duerksen, James van Hemert
 Planners Press, American Planning Association (2003).



Preserving Rural Character

Fred Heyer
 Planning Advisory Service, American Planning Association (1990).

Acknowledgements

The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget would like to extend special recognition and gratitude to the city of Richmond, Utah, and BIOWEST, Inc. Richmond City served as the basis for the *Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis Checklist*.

Further Assistance

For questions regarding *Utah's Rural Character Definition, Inventory and Analysis Checklist* or for technical assistance utilizing the checklist contact:

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For questions regarding creative zoning, design guidelines, development agreements, transfer of development rights or conservation easements contact:

Evan Curtis

Project Manager
 Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, State and Local Planning Section
 Phone: 801-538-1427
 Email: ecurtis@utah.gov

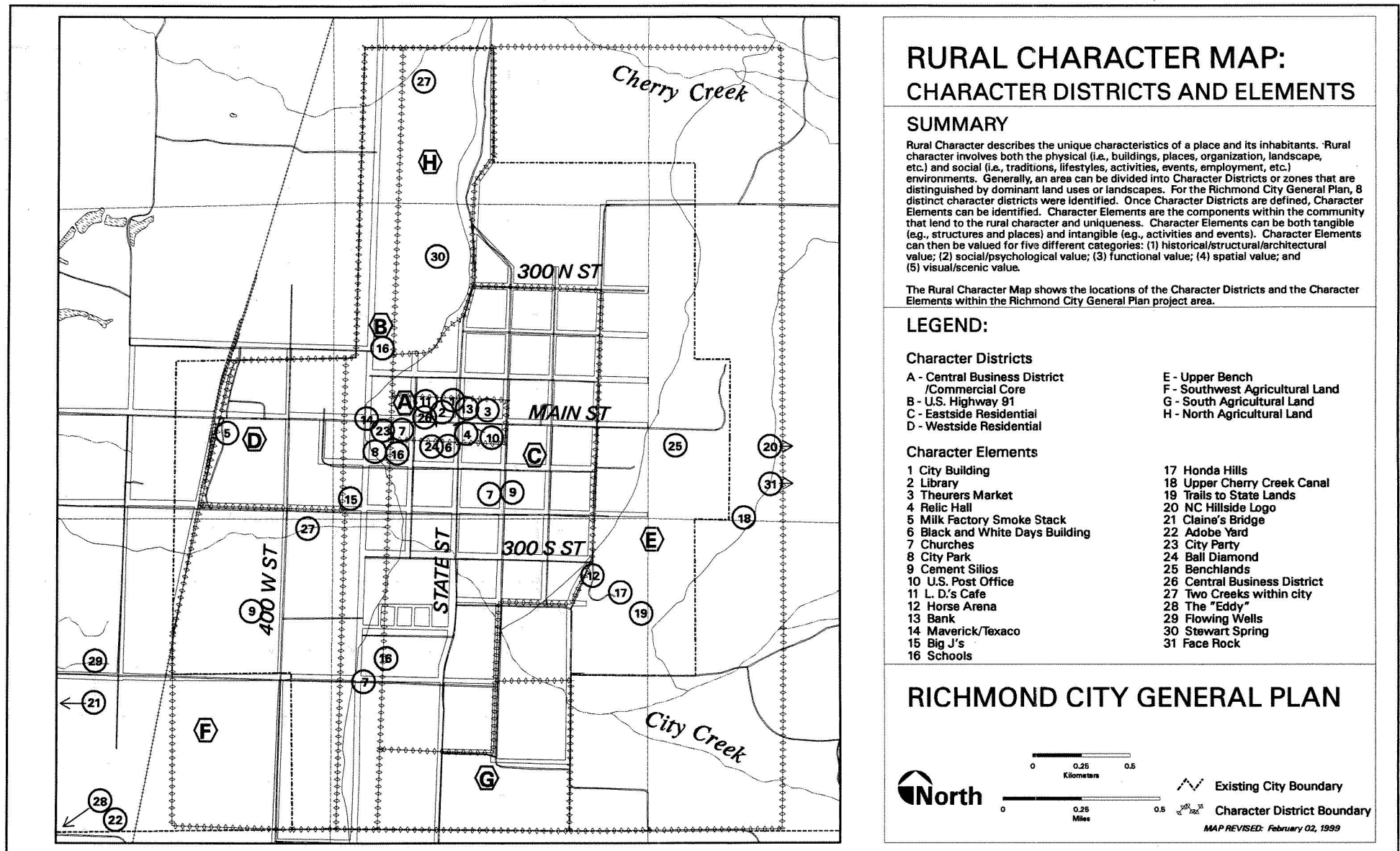
Division of State History Assistance

For historic preservation project planning and funding contact:

Wilson G. Martin

Associate Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
 Utah Department of Community and Culture, Division of State History
 Phone: 801-533-3552
 Email: wmartin@utah.gov
<http://history.utah.gov/grants/index.html>

Example Rural Character Map



Map available courtesy of Richmond, Utah.

<i>Character Element</i>	<i>Historical/ Structural/ Architectural Value</i>	<i>Social/ Psychological Value</i>	<i>Functional Value</i>	<i>Spatial Value</i>	<i>Visual Scenic Value</i>

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